

# Healthy Wrangell Program

## Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium

---

### Project Overview

Wrangell is a small island community in Southeast Alaska. The Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) received funding from the Indian Health Service Health Promotion/Disease Prevention in order to “enhance and maintain protective factors and reduce risk factors against cancer, cardiovascular disease, and obesity in Wrangell, Alaska.” This program is aimed at all residents.

Achieving these goals was organized around three objectives:

- Increase the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed by Wrangell residents by 5 percent in 2011 and an additional 5 percent in 2012.
- Encourage the adoption of clean indoor air policies by at least 50 individuals and 3 businesses.
- Increase the amount of physical activity performed by residents by 10 percent by July 31, 2012.

### Program/Activities

SEARHC helped form the Wrangell Community Garden, which allowed for the provision of local produce. A Hiking and Harvest program was developed to educate residents in local edible plants and berries. The Wrangell Schools have started to adopt a new menu for their meals that emphasizes low-sugar, low-fat, and low-sodium foods made from scratch. A fruit tree orchard was also planted at the Wrangell Elementary School.

SEARHC staff worked to inform the community and disseminate information on smoke-free initiatives to residents and businesses. SEARHC also created geo-caching and traditional canoe clubs as well as encouraged greater aquatic fitness offerings in local pools.



Wrangell, Alaska Fruit Tree Project  
Ceremonial tree being planted  
Photo courtesy of Alaska Pix

SEARHC has formed collaborations with the Healthy Wrangell Coalition in order to bring stakeholders together and define activities that would be sustainable and appropriate for the community. They also partnered with the Wrangell School District for nutrition and tobacco initiatives in the schools.

SEARHC measured the success of this grant in terms of direct and indirect results. Direct results included success in implementing new initiatives and the number of pledge/commitment forms received from residents and businesses.

Indirect results were obtained from a core measure survey that was conducted in 2010 and 2012. This survey allowed for comparison between the community in the first year of the grant period and the community at the end of the grant period. This survey had 164 adult respondents and 18 youth respondents in 2010. In 2012, there were 211 adult respondents and 24 youth respondents. This survey was used to assess the Wrangell community's perceptions and practices related to tobacco use, alcohol, nutrition, and physical activity. The results of this survey were used to provide indirect results of the grant such as a decrease in physical activity, an increase in the number of people

attempting to quit smoking, and an increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

### **Program/Activity Outcome**

There was a slight increase in the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten by adult residents of Wrangell. For children, there was an increase in the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten and a decrease in the average weight of survey respondents by five pounds. Overall it was estimated that fruit and vegetable consumption increased by at least five percent.

Three businesses agreed to go smoke free and 30 residents pledged to follow smoke-free policies for their homes or cars. Smoke-free workplace signage was placed in 25 Wrangell businesses. In the survey of residents, there was an increase in the number of people attempting to quit smoking (1.3% in 2010 to 3.1% in 2012) as well as a decrease in the number of people smoking “everyday” (7% decrease) or “some days” (4.7% decrease)

In the survey of residents, respondents reported an increase in the number of minutes per day they engaged in physical activity. However, other indicators of physical activity decreased.

### **Next Steps**

The Wrangell Community Garden, Hiking and Harvest program, fruit tree orchard, and changes to Wrangell Schools’ menus are all either self- or community-sustainable and expected to continue well past the end of this grant. SEARHC has staff that will continue to promote healthy living initiatives in Wrangell.